

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

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2 1. A method, comprising:

3 storing electronic legal documents in a database system, including storing
4 and indexing electronic characteristics associated with a native format of the
5 electronic legal documents;

6 providing access to the stored electronic legal documents to a user terminal
7 via a server communicatively coupled to the database system and to the user
8 terminal; and

9 if user-input information sent from the user terminal to the server is received,
10 processing the indexed electronic legal documents according to the received user-
11 input information in a manner that allows the processing to use the stored electronic
12 characteristics of the electronic legal documents.

1 2. The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic legal documents comprise
2 email messages having metadata including threading information and wherein
3 storing electronic characteristics associated with the native format comprises
4 storing the threading information.

1 3. The method of claim 1 wherein the user terminal comprises a computer.

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2 4. The method of claim 1 wherein storing electronic legal documents in the
3 database system, including storing and indexing the electronic characteristics
4 associated with the native format of the electronic legal documents comprises:

4 recursively extracting a plurality of electronic legal documents provided from
5 a source;

6 identifying a plurality of objects having different data formats for each of the
7 extracted electronic legal documents, one of the identified objects corresponding to
8 the electronic characteristics;

9 storing data associated with the one of the identified objects in a first location
10 in the database system;

11 converting the other identified objects and storing data associated with the
12 converted objects in a second location in the database system; and

13 indexing the data stored in the first and second locations.

1 5. The method of claim 1 wherein storing the electronic legal documents
2 comprises:

3 storing data associated with text content of the electronic legal documents in
4 a first server unit; and

5 storing data associated with metadata content of the electronic legal
6 documents in a second server unit having a database.

1 6. The method of claim 1, further comprising providing a user interface at the
2 user terminal, the user interface comprising a field to enter search query information
3 and a display to display processing summary information associated with the
4 electronic legal documents stored in the database system.

1 7. The method of claim 1 wherein processing the indexed electronic legal
2 documents comprises:

3 selecting one of the stored electronic legal documents based on the user-
4 input information

5 transmitting a copy of the selected electronic legal document for display at
6 the user terminal;

7 receiving from the user terminal processing summary information associated
8 with the displayed electronic legal document; and

9 storing the processing summary information in the database system to allow
10 the processing information and their corresponding electronic legal document to be
11 subsequently retrieved.

1 8. The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic documents comprise email
2 messages having attachment files, the method further comprising:

3 separating the attachment files from the email messages;

4 converting the attachment files into a first format and storing the converted
5 attachment files in the database system; and

6 converting the email messages into a second format and storing the
7 converted email messages in the database system.

1 9. A method to display stored electronic legal documents, the method
2 comprising:

3 providing a first field to allow a user to enter search query information
4 directed towards the stored electronic legal documents;

5 providing a window to display a representation of an electronic legal
6 document retrieved in response to the entered search query information, the
7 electronic legal document being retrievable by matching the search query

8 information with stored electronic characteristics associated with a native format of
9 the electronic legal documents; and

10 providing a plurality of second fields to allow the user to enter and save
11 processing information associated with the displayed representation of the electronic
12 legal document.

1 10. The method of claim 9 wherein the electronic legal documents comprise
2 email messages having threading information and wherein matching the search
3 query information with the stored electronic characteristics comprises providing
4 search results including threading information of email messages.

1 11. The method of claim 9, further comprising:
2 providing summary fields having summary information associated with the
3 stored electronic legal documents; and
4 providing the summary fields with links that, if activated, trigger a display of
5 representations of electronic legal documents corresponding to the activated links.

1 12. The method of claim 9, further comprising:
2 providing search result fields having search result information associated with
3 the search query information; and
4 providing the search result fields with links that, if activated, trigger a display
5 of representations of electronic legal documents corresponding to the activated
6 links.

1 13. A method, comprising:

2 recursively extracting a plurality of electronic documents provided from a
3 source, each of the electronic documents having electronic characteristics that are
4 associated with a native format of the electronic document and that uniquely identify
5 the electronic documents from each other;

6 for each of the extracted electronic documents, identifying a plurality of
7 objects having different data formats, one of the identified objects corresponding to
8 the electronic characteristics;

9 storing data associated with the one of the identified objects in a first location
10 in a database system;

11 converting the other identified objects and storing data associated with the
12 converted objects in a second location in the database system; and

13 indexing the data stored in the first and second locations.

1 14. The method of claim 13 wherein recursively extracting the plurality of
2 electronic documents comprises extracting electronic documents located in a
3 plurality of paths in a directory structure.

1 15. The method of claim 13 wherein the electronic documents comprise email
2 messages and the electronic characteristics comprise metadata, the metadata
3 including threading information.

1 16. The method of claim 13 wherein the electronic documents comprise email
2 messages having attachment files, the method further comprising:

3 separating the attachment files from the email messages;

4 converting the attachment files into a first format and storing the converted
5 attachment files in the database system; and

6 converting the email messages into a second format and storing the
7 converted email messages in the database system.

1 17. A network node, comprising:

2 a server communicatively coupled to a database system, the database
3 system having stored and indexed therein electronic documents and electronic
4 characteristics associated with a native format of the electronic documents, the
5 server responsive to a search query transmitted from a user node to search the
6 database system for electronic documents matching the search query, the server
7 being capable of using indexing information and the stored electronic characteristics
8 to provide search results to the user node that are responsive to the search query.

1 18. The network node of claim 17 wherein the server stores user-input
2 information associated with representations of electronic documents provided to the
3 user node, the user-input information being stored by the server in the database
4 system and being retrievable by the server in response to subsequent search
5 queries transmitted from the user node.

1 19. The network node of claim 17 wherein the electronic documents comprise
2 email messages having threading information, the electronic characteristics of the
3 electronic documents including the threading information, the search results capable
4 of being provided to the user node along with email messages and their
5 corresponding threading information.

1 20. A system, comprising:

2 a conversion engine to convert electronic legal documents into a database
3 format, the conversion engine configured to identify electronic characteristics
4 associated with a native format of the electronic legal documents;

5 a server coupleable to the conversion engine and communicatively coupled
6 to a database system, the database system having stored and indexed therein the
7 electronic legal documents converted by the conversion engine and the electronic
8 characteristics identified by the conversion engine, the server capable of being
9 responsive to a search query transmitted from a user node to search the database
10 system for electronic legal documents matching the search query, the server
11 capable of using the indexing information and the electronic characteristics to
12 provide search results to the user node that are responsive to the search query.

1 21. The system of claim 20 wherein the conversion engine is capable of loading
2 the electronic legal documents into the database system by:

3 recursively extracting a plurality of electronic legal documents provided from
4 a source;

5 identifying a plurality of objects having different data formats for each of the
6 extracted electronic legal documents, one of the identified objects corresponding to
7 the electronic characteristics;

8 storing data associated with the one of the identified objects in a first location
9 in the database system;

10 converting the other identified objects and storing data associated with the
11 converted objects in a second location in the database system; and

12 indexing the data stored in the first and second locations.

1 22. The system of claim 20 wherein the server comprises:

2 a first server unit to store indexing information associated with text content of
3 the electronic legal documents; and

4 a second server unit to store indexing information associated with metadata
5 content of the electronic legal documents.

1 23. A machine-readable medium containing a data structure of electronic legal
2 document information comprising a plurality of first tables having indexing
3 information associated with a text content of electronic legal documents, a second
4 plurality of tables having indexing information associated with metadata content of
5 the electronic legal documents, the indexing information in the second tables
6 corresponding to electronic characteristics associated with a native format of the
7 electronic legal documents.

1 24. The machine-readable medium of claim 23, further comprising a third plurality
2 of tables having a substantially native display format of the electronic legal
3 documents.

1 25. The machine-readable medium of claim 23 wherein the second plurality of
2 tables includes fields to store user-input information associated with representations
3 of electronic legal documents processed by a user.

1 26. The machine-readable medium of claim 23 wherein the second plurality of
2 tables further have indexing information associated with attachment files of the
3 electronic legal documents.

1 27. The machine-readable medium of claim 23 wherein the electronic legal
2 documents comprise email messages having metadata information, the second
3 plurality of tables having indexing information corresponding to the metadata
4 information, the metadata information useable to relate threading information of the
5 electronic legal documents.

1 28. A machine-readable medium having stored therein instructions, which when
2 executed by a processor, cause the processor to perform the following:

3 provide access to indexed electronic legal documents stored in a database
4 system, the stored electronic legal documents being stored and indexed in the
5 database system along with electronic characteristics associated with the native
6 format of the electronic legal documents; and

7 if user-input information is received, process the indexed electronic legal
8 documents according to the received user-input information and by using the stored
9 electronic characteristics.

1 29. The machine-readable medium of claim 28 wherein the processor further
2 performs the following:

3 if user-input information including a text content search query is received,
4 search the stored electronic legal documents using indexing information associated
5 with textual content of the stored electronic legal documents; and

6 if user-input information including a metadata search query is received,
7 search the stored electronic legal documents using indexing information associated
8 with metadata content of the stored electronic legal documents.

1 30. The machine-readable medium of claim 28 wherein the stored electronic
2 legal documents comprise email messages and wherein the processor searches for
3 individual email messages based on user-input information including a search query
4 of metadata content or text content of the email messages.

1 31. The method of claim 8 wherein the first and second formats comprise a same
2 format.

1 32. The method of claim 16 wherein the first and second formats comprise a
2 same format.

1 33. The network node of claim 17 wherein the electronic documents comprise
2 electronic legal documents.

1 34. The method of claim 13 wherein the electronic documents comprise
2 electronic legal documents.